

# Applying to Oxford and Cambridge



# Why are Oxford & Cambridge Different?

- The most prestigious universities in UK
- Also the richest!
- The unique tutorial/supervision system
- College based provision
- Highly intense courses, often very distinctive
- Intense terms!
- Can only apply to one!



# Financial and other support

- Fees : 9.25k per annum (same as elsewhere)
- Extensive programme of bursaries and fee waivers
- College awards: e.g. scholarships and small grants
- Low cost of living
- Pastoral support in College



# What they offer: social life

- College community: broad, open and easy to settle into
- Student clubs and societies tend to be extensively subsidised and benefit from excellent facilities
- Sport, music, drama, charity work, volunteering, student journalism and student politics
- Pubs, clubs, bars, restaurants, theatres and cinemas

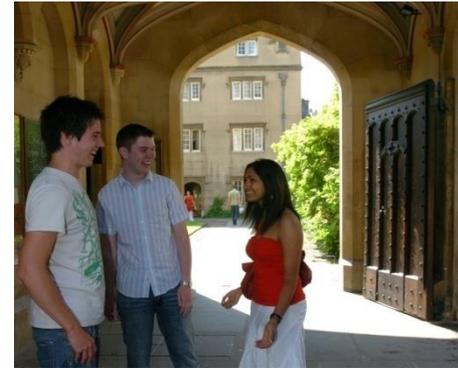


# Who is it for?

- Outstanding students with a genuine interest and passion in their subject. Not just good at exams!
- Most people who apply are straight-A students; only a few get offers.
- People who are independent learners, who do extra work without prompts or direction.
- Hard workers who relish the intensity of fitting more in to shorter terms!
- You will enjoy the 1-1 interaction of tutorials/supervisions
- You do not have to be a well rounded person with a string of extra curricular achievements! Geeks rule!

# What do they look for in applicants?

- Passion for their chosen subject and appropriate choice of course
- Very strong examinations record:
  - Applicants have, overall, an average of ~ 5-8 A\*s at GCSE and ~ predicted minimum A\*AA at A level
- Outstanding school/college reference
- Potential to succeed academically in Oxbridge, meaning:
  - Enthusiasm for complex and challenging ideas
  - Clarity of thought and analytical ability
  - Real intellectual flexibility



# Selection criteria

Admissions decisions are based on:

- A level (or equivalent) grades and subject combinations
- GCSE grades and contextual data
- UCAS personal statement and school/college reference
- Submitted work (where requested)
- Test results
- Interview performance



# Application

- Students apply via UCAS to Oxford OR Cambridge by 15 October (*aka September*)
- Cambridge applicants also fill in an online questionnaire after they have submitted their UCAS form
- Most applicants sit an aptitude test in early November;
- Most applicants choose a College but many take the 'open' application route; choice of College has no impact upon likelihood of success (they say)
- Some students submit written work (eg marked essays)
- Typical offer:       A\*A\*A to AAA



# UCAS personal statements and references

- *Personal statements* confirm choice of subject and course and can provide a starting-point for discussion at interview
- They should be largely academic, focusing on chosen subject, reading and other wider exploration, which might include work experience for vocational subjects
- They must be both honest and *personal*
- *You need to start building your PS now! What wider reading/activity can you discuss in your PS?*

# Tests

- Some of these are multiple-choice tests of critical thinking and problem-solving, whereas others are text- and essay-based; some combine both elements
- All tests, plus the BMAT used by both universities, have associated websites with past papers and sample questions
- The tests are not generally content-based, though some of those that include essays will reward knowledge to a degree
- It is a good idea to do some practice, via the available past papers, in advance of taking a test
- Cambridge sometimes use specific tests in the interview period.

# Interviews

- The majority of applicants at Cambridge are called for interview; fewer for Oxford
- Interviews usually take place in December, and are conducted principally by the 'preference' College; Oxford applicants may well be interviewed by more than one College
- Applicants usually have 2-4 interviews, each lasting 20-30 minutes
- Interviews are academic, subject-focused discussions in which lecturers hope to see applicants thinking problems through for themselves
- No hidden agenda; no 'trick' questions!

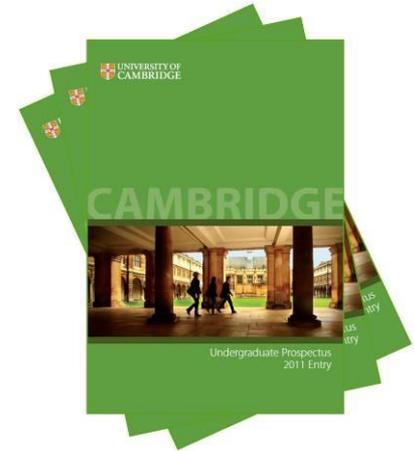


# Interviews > *what to expect*

- Focused and challenging questions, typical of teaching and learning at Oxford or Cambridge
- Applicants are usually asked about:
  - Academic work they have completed in the last year or two
  - Relevant wider reading or relevant work experience
  - Subject-related issues that are very readily visible in the wider world
  - ‘Prompt’ material
- You may be asked to think about your existing knowledge in new ways
- You may well need to ask questions and it is likely that they will need to prompt you now and again

# Finding out more

- Undergraduate Prospectuses
- Alternative prospectus
- University websites
- Main Open Days (2018):
  - 27 and 28 June (Oxford)
  - 5 July and 6 July (Cambridge – booking opens April; register interest now)



# Oxbridge Academy

18 offers this year. Over 20 next year!

OXBRIDGE  
2018



# This Year's Offers

Art	Oxford	6.5	A*AA
Engineering	Oxford	7.3	A*A*A
History	Oxford	7.8	A*A*A
History	Cambridge	7.5	A*A*A*
History	Cambridge	7.2	A*AA
History	Cambridge	7.8	A*A*A
History	Oxford	7.3	A*A*A*
HSPS	Cambridge	6.9	A*A*A
HSPS	Cambridge	7.2	A*A*A
HSPS	Cambridge	7.5	A*A*A
Law	Cambridge	7.0	A*A*A
Law	Cambridge	7.1	A*A*A
Law	Oxford	7.2	AAA
Maths	Cambridge	7.4	A*A*A
Music	Cambridge	7.7	A*AA
Science	Oxford	7.6	A*A*A*
Science	Oxford	7.5	A*A*A
Science	Oxford	7.6	A*A*A*

## Tasks:

- **Research Oxbridge courses and decide (and let me know)**
- **Research non-Oxbridge courses too**

## Book open days

Booking for Cambridge opens in late April. Complete Register Interest form.

- Not mandatory to book Oxford. Many events are offered on a drop-in basis. However strongly advise you check the programme on offer at your subject department and at colleges as some do require booking for certain events.
- Other universities – [opendays.com](http://opendays.com) or check out individual uni's.

# Oxbridge

- **Read, read, read!**
- Depth. Become an expert in a small field. Be enthusiastic.
- If I asked you now what have you done that's relevant to your course and not related to the A level, how much could you tell me?

# Oxbridge Academy

## Resources:

- [Guardian long reads](#)
- [In our time](#)
- [Oxplore](#)
- [New Statesman long reads](#)
- [New Scientist](#)
- [London Review of Books](#)
- [The Millions](#)
- [Old exam questions](#)
- [Nrich](#)

- **Start thinking about entrance tests**
- This is the priority for the summer term. Start doing past tests. They are very challenging!

- **Start thinking about personal statements**
- Start thinking about content. More on this next term. Are there lots of things you can talk about? If not, you better get on with doing those things!

Questions?